

cree. As it is, we will forget—and remember that the Prussians are at Buzenval."

He drew the veil across the picture impatiently, and would hear no more of it. The shadow of the dream lay heavy upon him; but that which he would have bartered his soul to learn was the secret of the little hand which touched the dreamer's heart. Would Sabine come to him in the hour of his death? A strange fatality answered that it might be so.

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The last great sortie from Paris began the morning of January 19, and was continued the following day. Dolores Morizon did not leave the city, for she had her work to do in the quarters where the shells fell thickly and the stricken children spoke of the glory and the pomp of war. Edmund Orlopp, however, was up shortly before dawn; and being one of the few civilians who still possessed a horse (the majority of the others long since had been eaten), he rode from the Porte Maillot at half-past seven in the morning and speedily found himself one of a great and disorderly army, which had sworn to defeat the Prussians or never to return.

Little as he believed in the artist Gabriel's dream-picture, Orlopp, nevertheless, had promised Dolores that he would look after her friend; and no sooner did he come up with the soldiers than he asked them for news of the Fifty-second Battalion, of which Gabriel had commanded a company almost since the siege began.

"You will find them on the Montretout side of Valérien," a young Mobile said; while an older man, who shivered with the cold, added the further intimation: "And if you are as hungry as we are, you may eat them, monsieur."

The troops around laughed at the sally, and were glad to laugh. Clear as the morning broke, its raw air did not inspire courage; and many a lad who looked down from the heights upon the western side of Paris told himself that his body might lie in one of the valleys below at midnight. These fellows, half starved and wholly wretched, did not believe that the terrible Prussians would be driven back. They scoffed at General Ducrot's manifestos. They would have sold half of France for a good ragout and a dish of chicken to follow it. As it was, they must plod on, in tattered boots and ragged uniforms, through mud and dirty snow, in the midst of artillery-wagons innumerable, by the Red Cross ambulances, to those distant woods where death awaited them. "Ah, the glory of war!" they cried as they bit at the stems of their pipes and dreamed dreams of hot bread and beef.

It was no easy task to make his way by the barricades which the French had erected everywhere upon the road to Mont Valérien, that mighty fort which defended Paris upon its western side; but partly by cajolery, partly by honest British determination, Orlopp forced a passage; and keeping upon a crest of the hills he perceived the whole battle-field presently, and became aware that the action had begun. In the distance, across a great, bare expanse of plain, stood the plateau of La Bergerie and the Prussian batteries at Garches. A hazy mist did not permit more than an outline of the woods and park of Buzenval; but immediately below him in the valley a countless horde of red-legged, blue-coated troops advanced toward those woods at the bugle's call and began to leave dreadful witnesses to their courage upon the muddy fields behind them.

By no means the first battle of which he had been a spectator, Orlopp's pulse none the less quickened at the dramatic spectacle; and he drove his horse on as fast as the road would permit, that he might join the vanguard and do his best for the wounded and maimed men, whose cries now added terror to the field. Irresistibly he found his course directed toward the woods of Buzenval, wherein the sharpest fighting might be found; and descending the hill anon, he came up with a company of the National Guards, and to his great satisfaction observed his friend Gabriel in command of them. The meeting between the two was fraternal in its cordiality. They met as those who otherwise had been strangers and alone among this mighty host.

"Well met, old friend!"

"And you, my dear Gabriel?"

"Impossible to complain when this is afoot. We are winning everywhere. There will be no siege of Paris to-morrow. Imagine it! we shall breakfast at St. Cloud and tell the story. I feel twenty years younger this morning."

"Then you are at school again. Are the men doing well?"

"I hope so. They are new to it. When the first volley was fired they all ducked together like pilgrims bowing to the Pope. It will pass off. I have had to flog one or two of them with the flat of my sword; but they will forgive me when it all is over. You, I suppose, are with the ambulance?"

"I am anywhere, everywhere; in particular, I go where you go at present."

The handsome face clouded for a brief instant—Gabriel remembered the picture of his dream.

"It was Mademoiselle Dolores who asked you to come," said he. "She understands me. Well, I am not ungrateful. But of course it was all nonsense. I see it now. If the Prussians are going to shoot me, it will not be in the Avenue de Jéna. Let us drink brandy to our luck. This cold is making a mummy of me."

They drank in turn from his flask and marched the brisker as they drew nearer to the woods. The scene at this moment was as picturesque as any the morning had shown them. A thin white mist lay over the park of Buzenval. The leafless trees, thrusting out bare branches into the fog, seemed so many sentinels defending the hidden Prussian lines. Grass, fresh and green and wet, gave a lawn-like carpet to show off the dark-blue coats of the guards and the bright-erimson trousers of the regulars. The valley itself might have been a vast stage whereon countless hordes of men played a part to the delight of the spectators upon the horse-shoe hills to the north and west. The little clouds of smoke, the spurts of fire from the rifles, appeared quite in keeping with a make-believe. Had it not been for those who ceased to advance, for the black shapes here and there upon the sodden ground, the deception would have been perfect. But those maimed actors spoke with a voice that none cared to hear.

To drive the Prussians back; to cut a road through the great human girdle in which Bismarck had caught the heart of Paris—did those poor fellows

coated figures skulking behind the grand old trees and to find wounded men in almost every glade and dell. As for the Prussians, they were to be perceived only at intervals, when the spiked helmets would appear above bush or coppice and bayonets must be employed to drive them out. For the rest of the time they were invisible, although their bullets tore the bark from the trees and sent many a poor fellow to his death upon the chilling grass.

Gabriel, a fierce patriot always and a man of incomparable bravery, found in this weird scene an inspiration altogether to his liking. Gradually all other ideas gave place to this supreme idea of destroying the Prussians root and branch, utterly annihilating them, and delivering France by one Gargantuan stroke which a miracle of daring should make good. The scene transformed him. Wherever Prussian helmets might be perceived, there he waved his sword and cried: "*En avant!*" His men, at first astonished, then dismayed, obeyed him for a little while with sullen docility. They fixed their bayonets and charged these cursed Prussians, driving the steel at them fiercely; but anon they slunk one by one to the rear, and the man who besought them with tears in his eyes to remember their oaths was left alone at the thicket's edge, a giant figure wreathed in smoke—a Colossus with the sweat of rage and defeat upon his brow.

"Sons of hounds, *en avant!* Do you not hear me? There are your enemies! Forward, I say, forward!" and at the words he advanced upon a sergeant of Bavarian infantry and almost cleaved his skull with his sword. As the man fell, three Prussian artillerymen leaped out of the bush and bore down upon the artist. They would have made an end of him there and then, but for Edmund Orlopp's revolver, whipped out suddenly and held so straight that the first of the Bavarians fell dead almost at his feet.

"Back!" he cried to Gabriel, "you can win nothing here. Back, and drive those camels up! My God, what cowards! Follow them, Gabriel, follow them!"

Gabriel scarcely heard him. The terrible sword thrust and cut at the Prussians with a ferocity that both astounded and dismayed them. Presently they found their legs, and bolted back into the spinney as though Satan himself had been upon their heels. A white cloud of smoke drifting over the scene hid it in an instant from Orlopp's eyes—the sounds of firing passed away as a tempest drifting across a valley. Anon the mist lifted again, and there stood Gabriel, his sword broken at his feet, his face buried in his hands as though he had been weeping.

"Are you hurt, my dear fellow? What is it, then? Come, let us get out of this. We cannot fight a regiment, Gabriel."

He awoke with a start when Orlopp spoke and stretched out a hand as though for some one to lead him. The fever had passed as it came. "Where are the men? What have I been doing?" he asked.

"You have been trying to cut a road to old Bismarck. Tell me that you are not hurt, and I will forgive you."

"Oh, I'm all right. Don't think about me. How did this poor fellow die?" He indicated the Bavarian sergeant who had fallen at his feet.

Orlopp insisted however, that he should leave the place. "We can do no good here," he exclaimed. "The men will rally if you go to them. I am glad you are not hurt, my dear fellow. It was a miracle."

They walked back side by side through the wood, Orlopp leading his horse. Gabriel began to put the story together piece by piece, and when he recalled his

men's cowardice there were tears of shame in his eyes. Perhaps he thought of those splendid pictures of war he had conceived so readily in his studio in the Avenue de Jéna. And this was reality: the craven, skulking figures behind the trees, the dead men staring upward at the mists. He wondered no more that premonition of ill had painted such a figure of death as he had unveiled for Dolores yesterday. France herself was in her agony. All would be lost in these days of doom.

"I shall fight no more," he said bitterly; and then: "You saw the men run. My God! to think that they are Frenchmen and that their grandfathers were at Jéna with Napoleon! I could shoot them with my own hand."

"Wiser to forget it," said Orlopp dryly. "They will do better next time. Young soldiers often are like this. I see that they have formed again over

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She Knelt at Gabriel's Side

in the red trousers understand it was that? did they believe that this day was their day of salvation? or did they go indifferently, sullenly, as the servants of a cause already lost? A stranger might have answered the question with difficulty. Here and there, in the woods, they fought for a few minutes like tigers. A few performed acts of splendid heroism. But there were regiments which flung down their rifles and would not march at all. Even Gabriel's company of National Guards began to prove turbulent when they entered the park of Buzenval and the bullets sang like birds invisible above their heads. What good could they do for France? They much sooner would return to Paris and hot coffee.

Orlopp led his horse into the park, wishing to be near his friend to the end. He often had visited the beautiful Château of Buzenval in other days; and it seemed a strange thing to see all these blue-